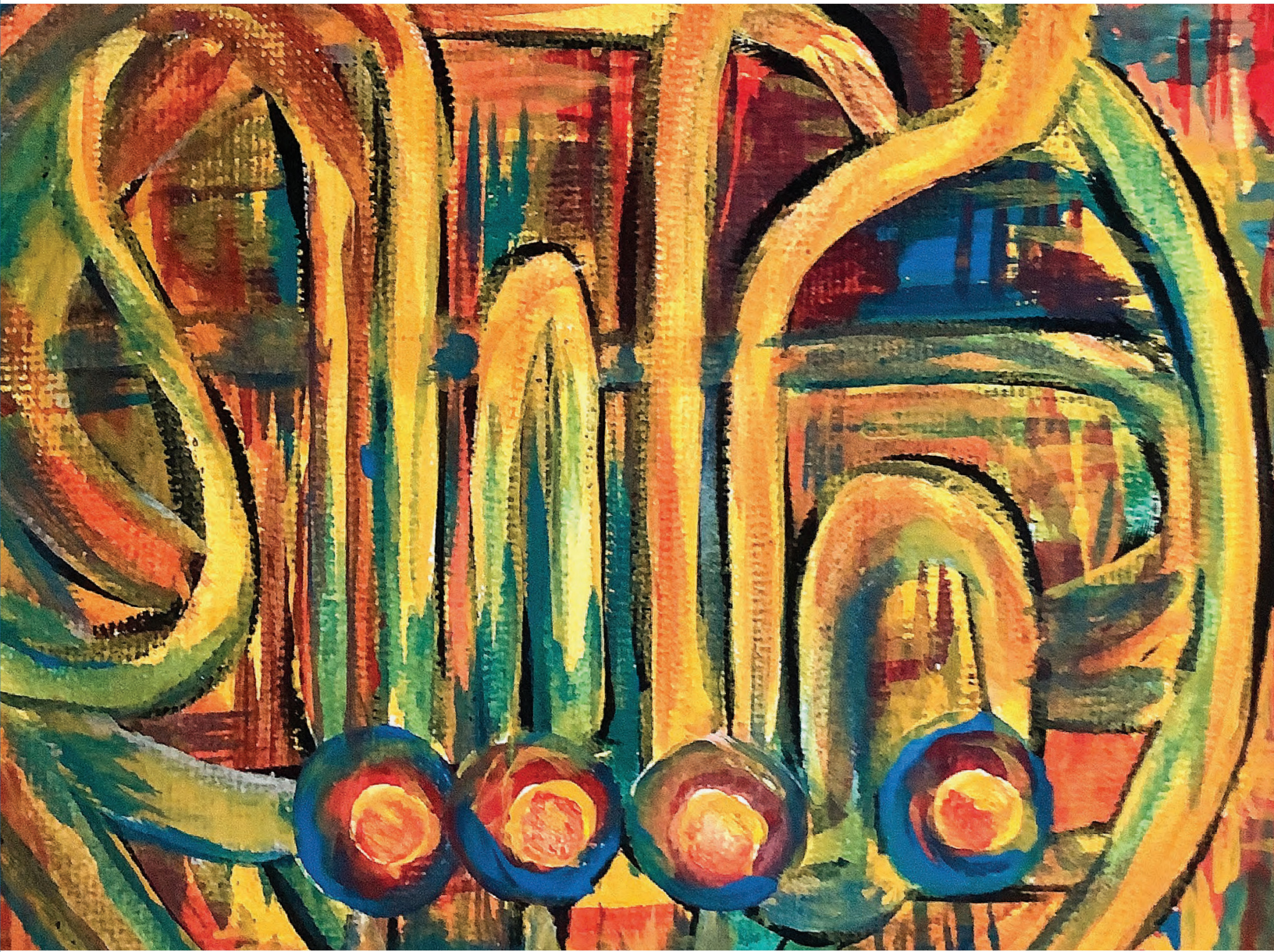


The Horn Call

MAY 2021



JOURNAL OF THE

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Sociedad Internacional de Trompas • International Horn Society

The Horn Call

Journal of the International Horn Society

Volume LI, No. 3, May 2021

James Boldin, Editor

ISSN 0046-7928

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Printed by Impact Printing and Graphics
Dallas, Texas USA

Layout and Design by Arrow Print and Copy
Sylvania, Ohio USA

The International Horn Society recommends that HORN be recognized as the correct English label for our instrument.
[From the Minutes of the First IHS General Meeting, June 15, 1971, Tallahassee, Florida, USA]

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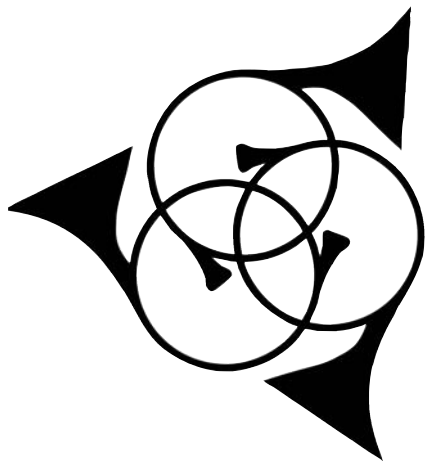
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The Horn Call (ISSN 0046-7928) is published tri-annually in October, February, and May. Subscription to the journal is included with an IHS membership. An annual IHS individual membership is \$50 (US), student membership \$32, library membership \$80, family membership \$75, three-year membership \$141, and life membership \$1000. Horn clubs of eight or more may become "club members" at a rate of \$35 per member per year. Electronic memberships (no paper journal) are \$30 (annual), \$25 (student), \$90 (three-year), and \$950 (life). Forward payment (US check, international money order in US funds, or by Visa/Mastercard) with a permanent address to the IHS Membership Coordinator (Membership-Coor@hornsociety.org): Elaine Braun, 305 Raywood Ct., Nashville TN 37211-6000 (USA). See the IHS website for a change-of-address form or contact Elaine Braun or Julia Burtscher with the information.

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국제호른협회

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International Horn Society

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From the Editor

James Boldin

Dear Friends:

By the time you read this, more than a year will have passed since the COVID-19 pandemic shut down or severely curtailed live performing arts events. We all eagerly await the day when we can fully resume those activities which bring joy and enrichment to our lives and those around us. The loss of life, employment, and simple face-to-face interaction with our students, colleagues, family, and friends these past several months is heart-breaking. Amidst it all, there have been some bright moments. Horn players have remained highly active, creating virtual performances, clinics, and other educational and artistic material. The resilience and compassion of the entire musical community has been heartening to see.

Looking towards the summer, I want to draw your attention to two special events: IHS 53, August 9-14, and a commemorative book dedicated to the first fifty years of the IHS. Both promise to be amazing offerings. As with previous symposia, IHS 53 will include an astounding array of featured and collaborating artists, masterclasses, clinics, presentations, and exhibits. Exceptionally low registration fees for members, combined with interactive, live-streamed, and pre-recorded formats, should allow for increased participation. Visit ihs53.com for registration and more information.

The 50th Anniversary book will include organizational highlights from the beginning to the present, with descriptions of programs, workshops and symposia, publications, awards and competitions, the people who have shaped the society, and much more. Keep an eye on hornsociety.org for more information about the release of this one-of-a-kind volume, and check out the ad in this issue. Last but not least, I hope you'll take the opportunity to read the variety of content in this issue, including obituaries for and memories of Jan Bach (1937-2020) and Fredrick Bergstone (1935-2021); Part 2 of Mary Ritch's interview with Robert Watt; an article on unaccompanied repertoire by Douglas Hill; a conversation with Thomas Jöstlein by Layne Anspach; and several other interesting and informative articles!

Be well,

James



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The style manuals used by *The Horn Call* are *The Chicago Manual of Style*, fourteenth edition, and *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, sixth edition, by Kate Turabian. Refer to these texts or recent issues of *The Horn Call* for guidelines regarding usage, style, and formatting. The author's name, email address (or home/business address), photograph, and a brief biography should be included with all submissions. Authors are hereby advised that there may be editorial spelling/style/grammatical changes to articles in order to maintain the journal's format and professional integrity. In general, submissions should be approximately 1500 to 4000 words in length. Longer articles may be considered, but with the understanding that they may be edited for length and content, with the option to publish additional material from the original submission at hornsociety.org/publications/horn-call/extras.

The Horn Call is currently created with Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, Reader 9, and Acrobat. Prospective articles and accompanying materials (images, musical examples, etc.) should be submitted electronically to editor@hornsociety.org. For large files and/or a large number of files, a link to a file-sharing service such as Dropbox, Google Drive, etc., can be included. Footnotes (endnotes) should be numbered consecutively (no Roman numerals) and placed at the end of the text. Musical examples should be attached as pdf, jpg, or tiff files, or embedded in a Word document. For images, 300 dpi is the minimum resolution necessary for clear reproductions in *The Horn Call*. A [Horn Call article template](#) is available online.

The octave designation system used in *The Horn Call* is the one preferred by *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, edited by Don Randel (1986):

The diagram shows a musical staff with a bass clef on the left and a treble clef on the right. Below the staff, seven notes are shown with their corresponding octave designations: C₁, C, c, c', c'', c''', and c''''.

Robert Watt Remembers, Part 2

by Mary Ritch

This interview is the second in a three-part series. Part 1 is published in the February 2021 issue of The Horn Call. Unless otherwise indicated, all photos are from the collection of Robert Watt. Sources for the article can be found online at <https://hornsociety.org/publications/horn-call/extras>.



Harry Shapiro (1914-2014)
in rehearsal (from Dignity
Memorial)

Music School and Early Career

At New England Conservatory,¹ my horn teacher was Harry Shapiro, second horn of the Boston Symphony. He gave me a list of books to order, all from the Paris Conservatory school of horn playing. The most interesting one was a transposing method that used beautiful melodies of French composers.² The exercises were broken up into different keys and they fit together like a puzzle and sounded great if one played the correct transpositions. Harry said to me, “You can’t read as well as you should. You can’t think quickly enough in musical situations; we will work on it.” And how we did – he must have dragged every horn part in the Boston Symphony library to my lesson. Every week he had new music for me to sight-read, all sorts of odd time signatures and rhythms. To top this off, Harry found me a community orchestra where I could play first horn, The Newton Symphony, conducted by a violinist from the Boston Symphony. The orchestra was quite good and the best thing in the world for my playing. Right away, I learned that I had to project my sound more in that group. It was bigger and better than the conservatory orchestra, with many very strong string players. My training with Harry really paid off. I could read most anything the first time we played it.

Soloing with the Boston Pops

After my first year at NEC, Harry thought I should attend a summer music camp. A cello player from the Boston Symphony ran a music camp in the Berkshire Hills in western Massachusetts, The Red Fox Music Camp.³ Harry asked me if I had an interest in being in the country for the summer. I told him I had never heard of a music camp. He told me that it was an orchestra that rehearsed and played concerts in a lush, green, mountainous setting. This was a completely foreign concept to me, a city slicker who had lived and worked in the bustling, overpopulated cities of Asbury Park, New York City, and Boston, and who had never ventured out to the serene wilderness of the Berkshire Mountains. At my next lesson, he had the director of the music camp there to hear me play, and to see if I could take direction from a conductor. He had me play a few orchestra parts in different ways, then said, “Fine, you can be my first horn and you’re going to have a wonderful summer.” I almost cried.

Around the same time, Harry thought that I was playing the Strauss First Concerto very well and that I should play it with the Boston Pops. Harry told me to come to Symphony Hall, and when the Pops rehearsal was over, I was to go stand next to the piano on the stage and wait for his cue. “When I point at you, start playing the Strauss.” It all happened very fast. As the orchestra stood up to leave, Arthur Fiedler tapped the podium with his baton and said, “Thank you, orchestra.” Harry came from out of nowhere and pointed at me to play. As I played the opening of the Strauss, the entire orchestra turned around in surprise, politely sat back down, and listened while I played through the entire first movement of the concerto. It was frightening, but it worked. Harry had orchestrated that whole amazing scene. When I finished, the orchestra applauded and Fiedler said, “Very good, Harry, he’s a very talented boy. Maybe we could have him play this in Plumber Park this summer – in the colored area.” Fiedler came over to me

and shook my hand, “Thank you, son, you play very well.” Harry told me later that everything went very well and not to worry, because “now Fiedler thinks it’s his idea, so you’ll be playing this concerto with the Pops this summer.” The problem then was how to live with the idea that I was actually going to be a soloist with the Boston Pops. I can’t remember a happier time in my life. I had a great musical opportunity to improve my playing over the summer, I had a solo engagement with the Boston Pops under Arthur Fiedler, and I had a great teacher who made all of it possible. I was extremely blessed. The day before the performance, the Boston Pops sent a luxury car to take me to Fiedler’s house in Brookline for a run-through of the concerto with a pianist. The famous maestro conducted and coached me through the concerto, and we had few beers together afterwards while he showed me his fire-engine memorabilia. The next day, I was performing in a special Esplanade Concert before a crowd of 2,000 people sitting on blankets and folding chairs in the grassy areas and on stone columns (which were the only remnants of the Old Franklin Park Playhouse).⁴ I had walked out ahead of Fiedler to the stage and right away the all-Black audience applauded and yelled, “Yes, my brother, we are glad to see you! We are here for *you!*” When the last movement came, I started a half-beat late but caught up and it all ended well. The crowd roared. I was soaking wet with perspiration. It was intermission and everybody poured backstage to see me. It was a little scary at first having so many people physically rush me in such an excited manner. I just



SOLOIST—Robert Lee Watt, Asbury Park, a student at Boston’s New England Conservatory of Music, performed Strauss’ “Horn Concerto No. 1” with the Boston Symphony Orchestra Monday.

Clipping from Asbury Park Press, 12 July 1968, p. 18. Should read “Boston Pops”

stayed calm, held onto my mother's arm, smiled, and shook hands. My cousin, Bobby Booker, was there; and as always, he was very supportive. He shook my hand and hugged me, saying, "Way to go, Cuz." My mother got to meet Arthur Fiedler backstage. I later repeated the same concerto on November 9, 1969 with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra under conductor Henry Lewis, for whom I had auditioned at Tanglewood the previous summer. My horn teacher Harry had introduced me to Henry, who was at Tanglewood conducting the Boston Symphony and was music director of the New Jersey Symphony. I had a very nice talk with him about many musical topics. After

the performance, I went back to finish out Red Fox Music Camp. The thing I remember most about being in the Berkshires was seeing the stars for the first time without the bright lights of the city getting in the way.



Robert and his mother, Eleanor, with Arthur Fiedler backstage after performing the Strauss Concerto No. 1 with the Boston Pops Orchestra on July 8, 1968.

My First Professional Jobs

One day my teacher called and told me to meet him at the Beethoven statue at the Conservatory. I was very curious because it was mid-week, and we didn't have a lesson scheduled. He was waiting there with a little envelope when I arrived. He greeted me warmly and asked how I was doing in school. I told him that school was still difficult, but I was doing a lot better. He looked at me in that familiar deadpan manner, which told me that something amazing was about to happen. He handed me an envelope. "Now this is a little job, Bob. All the information is enclosed." Curious, I opened the envelope. "Now, whatever you do, don't be late for this job, Bob. You only get one chance in this business." He had just hired me for the Boston Ballet playing *The Nutcracker* with Arthur Fiedler conducting. On the paper it said something about Musicians Union Local 9. In addition to the little piece of paper, there was a check from Harry for \$80.00 to join the union. I looked at him puzzled and said, "This is a check from you – I don't understand what to..." He cut me off, "Don't say anything, Bob. Remember, this check is just a little loan. When you get your paycheck, you'll pay me back." I smiled and thanked him again. I ran and joined the Musician's Union. That was the day I became a *professional* musician. I was playing fourth horn, and Dave Ohanian was first horn. This was not the first time Harry gave me money. I remember when I was hungry at the Tanglewood Festival (they only served two meals a day and I would just skip lunch), Harry insisted that I take a \$20 bill from him to buy food. I was so touched by this that my eyes teared up so I couldn't see the menu. He reminds me of the quote by jazz drummer, Leon "Ngudu" Chandler, "I don't teach music, I teach life." Harry (who lived to be 100) was always very paternal towards me. He was like a father to me.

Not long after that, I got a call from the Boston Symphony asking if I could play a week with them as assistant first horn. About a week later I got a check in the mail from the Boston Symphony. I had forgotten that they were so organized that they often paid in advance. The music was Bruckner's Eighth Symphony, which called for 8 horns and 4 Wagner Tuben. The BSO's music librarian called and told

me that I could have the music any time I wanted. It was all very exciting and a little bit scary, too. At my next lesson, I tried to tell Harry, but he already knew all about it. Of course he knew – he was the one who spoke up for me. He told me that it would be a snap for me. He suggested I go to the conservatory library and listen to the piece so I would have an idea of what it sounded like before the first rehearsal. He had also arranged for me to take one of the Tuben home and learn to play it, since this was the first time I'd played in a piece that used them. I wasn't going to play Wagner Tuba, but he said perhaps next time I would.

The day of the first rehearsal with the Boston Symphony, I went over to Symphony Hall early, because I didn't even want to even think about

how Harry would chew me out if I even looked like I was going to be late. I entered the backstage area, took out my horn, and went to feel out the stage. There were only a few people on stage. I was a little nervous, but my lip felt so good from preparing for that moment that after a few minutes, I relaxed. The first horn, James Stagliano, who I had watched play on TV for many years (and who had played the horn solo on the first album I bought as a child, Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony), seemed so relaxed when he played. Nothing seemed to bother him. He just leaned back and played the many solos in the symphony with a beautiful style and tone. When it came time to relieve him, I could feel Harry glancing over at me from his second horn position. I felt quick but fleeting bits of nerves when he did that, but after a short while I relaxed. The real shock came for me when the full brass section played together on the loud tutti passages. It made the floor under my chair vibrate and I felt goosebumps on top of my head when I was playing with them.

It was hard to believe that I was actually on that stage playing with those guys. New England Conservatory's President, Gunther Schuller, was very upset that I was not at school playing in the wind ensemble and came over to the rehearsal to drag me back across the street where I belonged. He didn't care that I had been hired by the Boston Symphony – I had an obligation to the Conservatory – but it turned out that I wasn't scheduled to be playing in the

"Harry...was always very paternal towards me. He was like a father to me."

wind ensemble after all. As the concert neared, Stagliano missed a rehearsal. To my great surprise, the conductor, Erich Leinsdorf, looked right at me and said, "We'll have the conservatory boy play first." (David Ohanian couldn't because he was playing first Wagner Tuba.) As if that weren't enough, Leinsdorf told Michael Tilson Thomas, the assistant conductor at the time, to take me in a room and review the tempi with me just in case I had to play first on the concert that night. I looked at Harry again in disbelief. He looked me square in the eyes and said, "If you have to do it, you'll do it." That rehearsal was quite the rush as I recall. Harry was sitting next to me, and seemed more nervous than I was. He had to keep reminding me to rest during the big brass tutti passages because I didn't have an assistant. Before every big solo, he'd lean over and tell me to really play out or give it my all. It was quite a morning.

Michael Tilson Thomas was helpful and encouraging,

The following year (1969), Harry sent me over to Symphony Hall to audition for Armando Ghitalla, principal trumpet of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Ghitalla complimented me, "Harry said you could blow the hell out of that thing and he was right. Congratulations, son. We'll see you this summer at the Berkshire Music Festival at Tanglewood."⁵ The Tanglewood Institute consisted of fellowship players, fellowship conductors, and fellowship composers. I was a recipient of the Leo Wasserman Foundation Fellowship. My



Tanglewood, 1969, Robert standing

favorite conductor that summer was Michael Tilson Thomas, with whom I had worked at the Boston Symphony. He had a skilled conducting technique and a great ear. I worked with him on several difficult contemporary compositions and he really knew how to work through difficult problems of a piece and give it polish.

I was honored to meet other Black artists who were at Tanglewood that year. There was one really great Black tenor who sang in one of the opera productions, James Wagner, and the celebrated composer David Baker, a professor of jazz at Indiana University. That summer I also attended a Boston Symphony rehearsal where the Black pianist André Watts was performing. I was completely awestruck listening to him. He was simply amazing, so deeply into the music. I had read that he had filled in at the last minute for an ailing Glenn Gould on a concert with Leonard Bern-

stein and the New York Philharmonic, playing the Brahms Second Piano Concerto. After the rehearsal I just had to meet him somehow. Harry Shapiro introduced us by saying, "Mr. Watt, meet Mr. Watts." André was very charmed by our similar names. He said something like, "I bet you received a lot of my checks, too." We shook hands and talked a little before he had to leave (we later became good friends). Incidentally, I ran across this favorite photo of me with André. In those days (1980s) he was smoking cigars. I promised to take a photo with a cigar in my mouth if he promised to quit. He did. We were both into reading big time. He would bring books for me to read. He was one of my favorite soloists to perform with in those days. He would often look back into the horn section and mouth our parts (especially the big horn moment in Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto). Tanglewood was certainly *the* place to be.

reviewing all the tempi with me after the rehearsal. He was quite the *Wunderkind* in those days. The horn section at that time was Stagliano, Shapiro, Ohanian, Ralph Pottle, Jr., Charles Yancich, Paul Keane, and Tom Newell. After the rehearsal I had to call my dear friend Barry Grossman to tell him what had happened and what might happen if Stagliano didn't show up for the concert. I was so nervous I went home and passed out. Around 5:00 pm the Boston Symphony called and told me that Jimmie was going to play. They thanked me for filling in and said that it would reflect in my paycheck. I had already bought my Alexander 103 horn for \$500 from Jimmie some months before, because I recall how nicely my sound blended with that section. Jimmie often ordered several horns at once from Alexander and he would pick one for himself and sell the others. I bought one of the extras. It's still my favorite horn.

Tanglewood

"My most memorable experience at Tanglewood was performing the Brahms Horn Trio."

My most memorable experience at Tanglewood was performing the Brahms Horn Trio. We were coached by Stagliano, from whom I had bought my horn just a few months prior. I loved that horn and broke it in that summer at Tanglewood. Jimmie coached us for two rehearsals and then we had two rehearsals with the celebrated pianist Lilian Kallir. After Tanglewood, I returned to Boston for my third year at the Conservatory.

Incidentally, I ran across this favorite photo of me with André. In those days (1980s) he was smoking cigars. I promised to take a photo with a cigar in my mouth if he promised to quit. He did. We were both into reading big time. He would bring books for me to read. He was one of my favorite soloists to perform with in those days. He would often look back into the horn section and mouth our parts (especially the big horn moment in Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto). Tanglewood was certainly *the* place to be.



Pianist André Watts and Robert in the 1980s

Preparing for Auditions

Towards the end of my third year, after the conservatory had financial problems and my scholarship got cancelled, Harry came to me and said, "I think it's time for you to start looking for a job." I said, "Doing what?" And he said, "Playing your horn, dummy!" I took two major symphony auditions as a student: the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Chicago Symphony (and made the finals); and another two after having worked as a pro for a couple of years: the New York Philharmonic, and the Boston Symphony. I ended up winning the first professional audition I took and played with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for 37 years.

In preparing for auditions, I came up with a little game that really helped me. First, I played my concerto three times. If there were any missed notes or anything that I didn't like, I would add another repetition to the set of three until I could play the concerto three times perfectly. This really forced me into extreme concentration. I followed the same procedure with each excerpt. If all three times were perfect, I went on to the next excerpt. During my lessons with Harry, we began with a mock audition. Every night after dinner I played for hours. This was in addition to hours put in during the

"I had no nerves, just a sudden strong, driving desire to play extremely well."

day with the set of six Maxime-Alphonse étude books. After several months of that routine, I could sit in a practice room with the lights off and go through the excerpts almost from memory (I later discovered I had a photographic memory, and would play my orchestral solos with my eyes closed, which infuriated Zubin Mehta, who demanded constant eye contact). One of the ways I would approximate the nerves experienced at auditions was to do 15 push-ups, and then play while still out of breath with my heart racing. I found that to be a good way to prepare for the rush of adrenaline and nerves that accompany auditioning and performing solos. Once your body comes to realize it's

possible to play a solo even if you are very nervous, it will consequently produce less adrenaline and therefore less nervous tremor. When at an actual audition, instead of standing around with all the other horn players ripping through excerpts, I would sit in a chair and go into a quiet zone, a kind of meditation, to conserve my energy. When it came close to my time to play, I got up, grabbed my horn, touched my lips to the mouthpiece to confirm that I was still warmed up, and went up to the stage.

LA Philharmonic Audition

When I walked onstage for the LA Philharmonic audition in 1970, I looked out into the house to see who was going to audition me and there was no one in sight. I waited for a while then left. I told the personnel manager, "Look, I've come a long way for this, I went out there and no one said anything and I didn't see anyone. Can you please tell me for whom or what am I supposed to be playing?" He cut me off. "I'm sorry, I'll take care of this." He went out to see for himself and then he came back and said it would take only a minute while he called someone. I reentered the stage and this time I could barely make out six or eight people sitting in distant dark shadows. I couldn't help but wonder, "Had they been there all the time?" If so, how strange that they let me come onstage and not greet me or say anything. Were they examining me like a specimen under a microscope? Now I was really ready to play, almost with a vengeance. I had no nerves, just a sudden strong, driving desire to play extremely well. They wanted me to start with the long call from Wagner's opera *Siegfried*, then asked me to explain what I knew about the opera, and then asked me to play the Tchaikovsky Fifth

Symphony solo. Then they asked me to play them again, but instead of playing them on my Alexander 103, this time they wanted the excerpts played on a Conn 8D (the make and model of horn they played in the LA Philharmonic.) The principal horn, Henry Sigismonti, who was standing right next to Zubin Mehta, loaned me his horn. I played the excerpts as requested, and my street-kid instincts kicked in and told me it was best not to tell them up front that I had previously owned two Conn 8Ds and had just sold one a year earlier. If I said nothing about owning or playing one, it would certainly win me points. They were very impressed. "It's amazing, Mr. Watt, how easily you can switch instruments. This is the brand of instrument we use here in the LA Philharmonic; it's called the Conn 8D." I said, "Yes, I believe I've heard of such an instrument!" It took the LA Philharmonic over two months to offer me the position. Gunther Schuller was worried that I might not like it there, because he thought the LA Philharmonic was kind of a bombastic orchestra in its playing style, didn't like their overall sound, and thought that the style of horn playing was very heavy, unmusical, and uncharacteristic – more of a studio sound.

Chicago Symphony Audition

I auditioned for the Chicago Symphony right after the LA Philharmonic. In the warmup room, the CSO's principal horn, Dale Clevenger, and principal trumpet, Bud Herseth, started telling me how to approach the first horn's pickup to the Act One opening of Richard Strauss's opera *Der Rosenkavalier*: "Just get it and don't worry about the notes in between the glissando, just rip up to it." I played through the entire excerpt and everyone said, "Very nice." Dale said that my horn, the Alex 103, would sound good

in their section. Then I had to stop and think for whom I had just played. That was the brass section of the Chicago Symphony! The personnel director and performance coordinator, bassist Radivoj Lah, watched me play my audition from backstage, instead of leaving like he did with the other auditionees. I made the finals and they actually paid for me to stay in Chicago for a week because I couldn't afford to stay that long between rounds.

Playing in the LA Philharmonic

I rented a hotel room for my first summer in Los Angeles near The Hollywood Bowl, the summer home of the LA Philharmonic. At 9:30 a.m. on June 30, 1970, I played assistant principal horn with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the first time. By September, I was touring with them on a 15-concert tour including New York City and Boston. I thought, "My God! My first tour, just months after I joined the orchestra, and I was coming back to my home territory!" The first concert was at the United Nations in New York for their twenty-fifth Anniversary, then on to Boston Symphony Hall. After Boston we flew to New York, where some of my family attended the concert. My mother was sitting in the balcony of Carnegie Hall with my older sister, Judy. She was constantly looking at me while I was on stage. She even waved and winked at me like a teenager. We played the Beethoven Triple Concerto with pianist Daniel Barenboim, his wife, cellist Jacqueline du Pré, and violinist Pinchas Zukerman. We also played *Symphonia Domestica* by Richard Strauss (which had eight

D-10—THE SUN-TELEGRAM Sunday, Feb. 21, 1971



New to Philharmonic

Three new members of Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra are Mary Louise Zeyen, cello; Robert Watt (standing), horn; and Alan de Veritch, viola. The orchestra and Zubin Mehta will perform April 14 at University of Redlands, April 15 at Bridges Auditorium, Claremont College.

Clipping from the Los Angeles Times, February 21, 1971

horns). I remember enjoying the Strauss – lots of fun horn passages – and Zubin was always listening to me to see if I could deliver. I was still on probation at that time for the next two years. My mother, who as a pianist had a very good musical ear, did say she could pick out my sound from the massively thick orchestral texture. After the Carnegie Hall concert, my family came backstage to see me, and my mother got to meet Zubin Mehta.

I remember with fondness my time playing at the Hollywood Bowl (the summer home of the LA Philharmonic). Since it was outdoors, wildlife of all kinds would wander up to us while rehearsing or playing. I remember seeing deer, doves, and dogs. Once, second horn Ralph Pyle even got "marked" by a raccoon!

One interesting highlight of my time with the LA Phil was the making of the 1974 Academy-Award winning short film "The Bolero," which was filmed at UCLA's Royce Hall in 1972 and released October 31, 1973. They interviewed us backstage and then filmed us in rehearsal and performance (in our street clothes) of Ravel's *Bolero*.



Robert, principal horn and Ralph Pyle, second horn, LA Philharmonic, The Hollywood Bowl, 1972



Image from "The Bolero" showing the LA Phil horn section from 1972. L-R: Hyman Markowitz, George Price, Robert Watt, Ralph Pyle, Sinclair Lott, Henry Sigismonti

Playing Assistant Principal Horn

When I started playing assistant principal with the LA Philharmonic, they had never had a full-time assistant first horn. For that reason, they didn't have the extra parts and the music librarian wasn't at all interested in copying extra parts for me. In fact, he yelled at me, "Just read off the first horn's music." The way it feels when actually doing the assistant part of the job – there's something very musically disconnected about it – like you're not really playing or part of the real action, especially when you have principal horns who don't want to tell you where to assist them, and think that the assistant should read their minds. For example, when I played first, they made it as difficult as possible by only offering me one little piece to play spaced over long periods of time, like one little piece per month or even less. They knew quite well, from playing principal horn themselves, that the less principal horn one plays, the more difficult it is. One of our principal horns always came off as if he never ventured

below middle C. Whenever there were a lot of low notes or bass clef in the music, this principal would always ask, "What are those notes down there, Bob? I never play down that low."

I had an interesting experience with Eugene Ormandy and Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*. It was another one of those mornings when the principal horn didn't show up. Ormandy called me in his room after rehearsal and said he didn't know I was principal and that I sounded really good. "I hope you'll be playing the concert." I had to explain that I was not principal and was just filling in for the morning. He went to management and insisted I play on the concert. The principal was pissed and caused a scene at the next rehearsal. He played the concert, but had a rather bad night. Ormandy was very upset.

An assistant principal horn is also referred to as utility horn, and in Europe

"Moving around in the section was the part of the job I liked the most."

they call it “bumper horn,” that is, to bump up the principal horn when needed in loud parts of the music so the principal horn can rest. Utility means moving up and down in the section, playing some first horn, usually those works the principal doesn’t want to play. I had to play a certain amount of second horn, which is a very busy position, and some third and fourth horn. Therefore, the player for assistant first horn position has to be quite flexible, playing well in all registers, high and low. Moving around in the section was the part of the job I liked the most. It gave me so many different musical perspectives. It helped to further train my ear and taught me to listen in context. I learned how composers used the different horn parts with other instruments of the orchestra – like third horn with the cellos, second horn with the violas, and fourth horn with the basses. It was also a challenge just to read another part for the sheer joy of doing a different task and playing in a different register or just expanding the mind. I especially enjoyed it when I had to play someone’s part in an emergency at a concert when I didn’t rehearse that part, making me the only one in the orchestra playing the concert without a rehearsal.

My workload was also influenced by the film and television recording industry. In the LA Philharmonic, many players would get a studio call on the morning of a Philharmonic rehearsal, accept the studio job, immediately call in sick for the rehearsal, and go play the studio job (hoping not to be discovered). A common scenario would be for me to get a call in the morning of a Philharmonic rehearsal from a contractor at Fox Studios. I would turn down the job and then when I arrived at the Philharmonic rehearsal, one of the principal horns would have called in sick because he had taken the job that I had turned down. The personnel manager would then ask me to fill in for the principal horn for the rehearsal. Once, both principals were suspended for seven months back-to-back. I asked the personnel manager what had happened, and he said one principal left the concert early to play another job and that he had just suspended him. The other principal later tried a similar stunt and got the same seven-month suspension. It was quite a windfall for me: nearly fourteen

“My workload was also influenced by the film and television recording industry.”

months of filling in on principal horn!

In 1983, the LA Philharmonic’s new music director, Carlo Maria Giulini, wanted to add another solo horn to the section. After a short search, John Cerminaro, former principal of the New York Philharmonic, was hired. He did a very nice job, even though he was just that, a solo horn. He only played the solos and not much else. He kept me

very busy when I was assisting him, so we got on quite well. Soon after he was hired, he told me that the New York Philharmonic had just hired a young Black associate principal horn player, Jerome Ashby. When Giulini was hired in 1978, it was the beginning of a whole new era for the orchestra. I always looked forward to playing principal horn when he was conducting.

I just loved being in his musical presence. The music was deeply in him and it was a true pleasure to be on the same stage with him. Once while on a tour of the East Coast, I played principal horn on Maurice Ravel’s *Scheherazade* in Carnegie Hall (May 4, 1979 with mezzo-soprano Frederica Von Stade). I played the soft pianissimo muted solo at the end never giving it a second thought. The next leg of the tour was in Washington DC, and as the orchestra was walking through the airport, I heard someone call out to me. “Mr. Watt! *Aspetta!* [Wait!] I turned around to find Giulini trying to catch up to me. He said in front of all the orchestra members, “Mr. Watt, I just want to say that I really enjoyed your beautiful pianissimo solo playing at the end of *Scheherazade* last night. It was very beautiful. Thank you!”

My last concert with the Los Angeles Philharmonic was with the very fine and celebrated maestro Lorin Maazel on January 27, 2008. We played the Benjamin Britten *War Requiem*. At the end of the concert, the maestro gave me my final

bow. It was a sweet moment, with my older brother Ronnie and many dear friends in the audience. That moment, that final bow, I thought would live only in my memory for the rest of my life. A few hours later, I was no longer a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. It was a departure with a deep sense of completeness. I had played a lot of music in those 37 years and I was ready for a change. I was satisfied and happy to move on to the next wave in life.



Bob Watt retired from the LA Philharmonic after 37 years.
Photo by Ringo H.W. Chiu for the LA Times

Soloing in Europe

In June of 1987, Esa-Pekka Salonen – who was appearing as guest conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the week – invited me to his summer chamber music festival in the little town of Porvoo outside Helsinki, Finland, The Avanti! Summer Sounds Festival. We set up in a small park where the people were waiting, as well as TV, radio, and media. Esa-Pekka made a rather long announcement about the Festival as he introduced me to the en-

thusiastic audience bustling with midsummer energy. The concert started with a Sibelius string piece and then my concerto (Mozart’s First Horn Concerto). I was moved to tears by the way they played Sibelius. I was convinced that in order to fully understand Sibelius, one must go to Finland and hear Finnish musicians play his music. I got nice applause and Esa-Pekka started the concerto. When I finished, I noticed that the crowd had grown larger. The next

day the local newspaper raved about my performance and described me as “coming seemingly from out of nowhere, looking like an Archangel (the large one, a messenger) descending on Finland and playing like a God.” I was very satisfied that I had played a concerto in Europe with a very fine conductor who had appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic as a guest. I knew then that he would have some kind of future with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, either as a principal guest conductor or as music director. The next day, there was a cancellation of a string quartet for a concert that was to start in a half hour. The secretary from the Festival asked if I could play for an hour or so by myself, because the people were already waiting. “The radio and TV are already set up and waiting and there is no one to play.” The secretary said that the place where I was going to play was on a cliff high above the sea. It looked like something from *Wuthering Heights*: a lone house on a seaside cliff. I played the Franz Strauss, C. D. Lorenz, an arrangement of arias from Bellini’s opera *I Puritani*, and variations from *Carnival of Venice* with

“I was moved to tears by the way they played Sibelius.”



Performing Mozart’s Concerto No. 1 with Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting in Finland June 25, 1987

a pianist with whom I had never played before, and who sight read the music at the performance. Afterwards, the TV cameras pushed in to interview me and several radio stations were holding their mikes over my head. I kept thinking this was more than I could have ever wished for. I had wanted to come to Europe and play as a soloist and here I was on Finnish TV and radio doing just that.

When I was in Finland, I met the celebrated German violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, who was playing Mozart’s Violin Concerto in A Major with the Slovak Chamber Orchestra at the Naantali Festival. I had played that very concerto with her earlier in the year with the Philharmonic in Los Angeles. When the rehearsal was over, I found her alone backstage. I introduced myself and we started talking about the concerto and that I had performed it with her a few months prior. She remembered that I had “gotten all the high notes.” We talked about my German Hanoverian dressage horse, Othello. I ended up asking her to dinner to talk about Herbert Von Karajan, whom she had known since she was a little girl.

Playing Chamber Music

In the early 1970s, I was invited to play at a private fundraiser for César Chávez, the Mexican American labor activist who founded what was later the United Farm Workers. He was the lone voice for migrant workers all over the American Southwest. Zubin conducted a small chamber group that played in the San Fernando Valley. Chávez spoke briefly about the struggle, which was followed by a reception where I had the pleasure of meeting him. He was an imposing figure, yet still a humble man, who seemed to look right into your soul. We spoke only of the struggle and

the future of the UFW. I remember everyone boycotting grapes for years in support of the farmworkers. After that exciting event, I was forced to look at Zubin with different eyes. I was truly honored to be part of such an event.

Some of the younger players in the LA Philharmonic invited me to play chamber music in their homes, and some of the players I met in the studios also wanted to play chamber music. I ended up playing at different homes of movie producers and film composers. That was how a new player in town got hired for work in the studios back then.

Studio Playing

My first studio call was from the legendary Benny Carter. It was for a series of recording sessions in January through March 1972 at Capitol Records and United Records in Hollywood for an album called *The Music of Bob Friedman - Twenty-five Years/To my Genie with love, Bob*, a rare double album featuring around 80 musicians. It was a bi-coastal project. Some of the recordings were done in LA and some in New York. The horn section was me, Gale Robinson, Alan Robinson, and Vince DeRosa. I began to get calls from Black contractors in Los Angeles to record with giants like Barry White (Barry Eugene Carter) and songwriter/producer Jerry Peters. Isaac Hayes (Isaac Lee Hayes, Jr.) even hired me to record and play concerts, and I was part of the original Wattstax⁶ Festival backing up Isaac Hayes on August 20, 1972. I remember trying to climb with my horn up the scaffolding they built as the stage in the middle of

the Los Angeles Coliseum (and trying not to fall.) Early that afternoon, as the crowd of over 110,000 mostly African-Americans took their seats, the Wattstax ’72 Orchestra and its conductor, composer “Dale” Ossman Warren, waited on stage in the sweltering summer heat for almost an hour to play the warm-up music, *Salvation Symphony*.⁷ I discovered that there was an entire group of Black instrumentalists who played record dates, except for major motion picture and TV, which was still an almost exclusively white clique, unless the writers were Black, in which case the Black players would be hired for that one time and then things would go back to normal. Some of the Black freelancers called me “Symphony Bob” because I used to show up on the late-night record dates still dressed in my tails after playing a Philharmonic concert. They even lifted the tails on my full-dress coat and joked, “Look! This brother has wings!”

In Part 3, Mr. Watt discusses being a Black hornist, racism, The New Brass Ensemble, teaching, his friendship with Jerome Ashby, other Black horn players, Black conductors, writing, his friendship with Miles Davis and the birth of the idea for his solo album I Play French Horn.

Mary Ritch earned a BM in performance at UMKC and an MM and DMA in performance at USC. An Illinois native, she began studying the horn at 14 with Bill Scharnberg, then at 19 decided to pursue a career in law. She resumed playing at 27, completing her BM under Nancy Cochran Block, and relocating to California for graduate studies with Dave Krehbiel and Jim Decker. At USC, she was also librarian and music copyist of the Wendell Hoss Memorial Library of the LA Horn Club from 1999-2003 and worked with such noted film composers as Elmer Bernstein, Bruce Broughton, and Michael Giacchino to prepare newly-commissioned works for publication by the Los Angeles Horn Club. After graduation, she worked as a paralegal and genealogist for law firms. In 2007, she started her own probate genealogy firm, *Benefinders.com*, which assists lawyers in locating missing heirs, and resumed playing the horn in 2018, and writing for music trade journals in 2019. This is her second article in a series about noted West Coast horn players' memoirs for *The Horn Call*. She wishes to thank Mr. Watt for his assistance with this article.

¹During my first semester, I was a music education major, which my father had talked me into so I "would have something to fall back on." I learned how to play all the stringed instruments, but decided to switch to performance for my second semester.

²Named the professor of horn at the Paris Conservatory in 1937 . . . Jean Devémy authored a book of horn etudes entitled *Vingt et une lectures études et neuf études d'examens avec changements de tons pour cor d'harmonie* (Twenty-one Study Etudes and Nine Test Etudes with Transposition for Horn), which was published in 1946 by Alphonse-Leduc. In the introduction, Devémy stressed the importance of studying the transpositions used by the horn. At first glance, the twenty-one etudes look fairly easy, but the frequent transposition changes imposed on the horn player render simple melodies much more difficult. Devémy also incorporates accidentals and stopped technique in his etudes, adding another layer of difficulty to the task of transposing. In the nine *Études d'examens*, he makes a point of forcing the horn player to use the "three registers of the instrument," pushing the range of each etude into the extremes of the horn range. Each etude is a full page, some containing unmeasured passages in the style of Gallay, with transposition changes as often as every bar. The book is seldom used in American horn studios.—From Emily Britton's 2014 Doctoral Dissertation "Jean Devémy and the Paris Conservatory *Morceaux de Concours* for Horn, 1938-1969" (see sources page)

<https://horn.society.org/publications/horn-call/extras>

³The Red Fox Music Camp, a/k/a/ "Little Tanglewood," was founded in 1949 by concert pianist Isabelle Sant'Ambrogio ("Mrs. S"), directed by her and her son John (BSO cellist from 1959-68, and St. Louis Symphony principal from 1968-2005) for 30 years, and was a six-week summer music camp located in New Marlboro, MA, for nearly 200 students, with faculty comprised of visiting members of the Boston Symphony from nearby Tanglewood, as well as professional musicians from around the world who played in the resident chamber music group, The New Marlboro Chamber Players. (see sources page)

⁴From "Boston's Riches Reach Roxbury" (see sources page)

⁵"The Tanglewood Music Center (TMC) was founded in 1940 as the Berkshire Music Center by the Boston Symphony Orchestra's music director, Serge Koussevitzky, three years after the establishment of Tanglewood as the summer home of the BSO. Koussevitzky's vision for the TMC was an institution where students would work closely with faculty members of the BSO and guest artists, as well as with each other."—From Wikipedia (see sources page)

⁶The documentary *Wattstax*, released in 1973, was about the momentous musical event that had taken place a year earlier as a healing truce after the 1965 Watts riots in Los Angeles.

⁷From Wikipedia (see sources page)

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